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## SB 98 RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

Statement for  
Senate Committee for  
Ecology, Environment and Recreation  
Public Hearing - 10 March 1981

By  
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SB 98 proposes to amend HRS 343-5(a) by excluding from environmental assessment those actions using State or county funds to acquire real property. This statement on SB 98 does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Subsection a, paragraph (1) addresses the need for environmental assessment for actions proposing the use of State or county lands or funds other than certain specialized expenditures which by their nature would be expected to have minimal impacts. One such specialize expenditure is the use of funds to acquire unimproved real property. The rationale being that the acquisition of unimproved property, i.e., the paper transfer of ownership and title, should not be expected to create significant environmental impacts. The potential for environmental significance arises when the development and use of that property is determined. SB 98 would delete the reference to "unimproved" real property and thereby remove the acquisition of real property, with State or county funds whether improved or unimproved, from environmental assessment. It would appear that such a broadening of the assessment exemption is unwise. The acquisition of unimproved property without assessment and the subsequent modification, i.e., interior remodeling also permitted without environmental assessment under the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) rules and regulations pursuant to HRS 343-5 paragraph 6, would allow for almost any eventual development or usage of an existing structure with no public environmental review. For example, the acquisition of a series of buildings to be converted into a hospital, school or correctional facility, or the acquisition of a sugar mill for conversion to a garage or vehicle storage or maintenance facility. These may be extreme cases but the implications seem clear. The acquisition of improved real property by the State or counties should be made available for public review through the assessment procedure.